

Message Text

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EXDIS

MADRID FOR AMB'S ANDERSON AND PARKER

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR SS AG MO MR

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON THE SAHARA

1. IN OUR LATEST, PERIODIC TOUR D' HORIZON ON THE MOROCCAN SCENE ON AUGUST 20, FRENCH AMBASSADOR JEAN-BERNARD RAIMOND (PROTECT-NOFORN) WAS HIS CUSTOMARY HELPFUL AND FORTHCOMING SELF IN ASSESSING MOROCCO'S PROSPECTS ON THE SAHARA IN THE LIGHT OF THE RECENT COLOMBO SUMMIT AND THIS FALL'S UNGA. HIGHLIGHTS OF RAIMOND'S COMMENTS FOLLOW:

2. SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SAHARA - THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE POLISARIO GUERRILLAS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT FROM ALGERIA, AND THAT MUCH OF THIS SUPPORT IS OF SOVIET ORIGIN. WHILE THE MOROCCAN MILITARY HAS FIRM CONTROL OVER THE FOUR OR FIVE SO-CALLED CITIES OR TOWNS IN THE SAHARA, GUERRILLAS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MOVE FAR MORE FREELY IN THE REST OF THE SAHARA THAN WAS THE CASE A FEW MONTHS AGO. IN ADDITION, THEY HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SPORADIC HIT-AND-RUN INCURSIONS INTO SOUTHERN MOROCCO. THERE IS A DEGREE OF FRUSTRATION IN THE MOROCCAN MILITARY OVER THIS CONSTANT,

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LOW-LEVEL ACTION, BUT THUS FAR NO INDICATION OF (A) PRESSURE

ON KING HASSAN TO MOVE AGAINST THE POLISARIO SANCTUARY IN THE TINDOUF AREA OF ALGERIA, OR (B) ANY LACK OF CONFIDENCE THAT GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES WILL GET OUT OF HAND. RECOGNIZING THAT THE CURRENT STRATEGY OF SIZABLE, ALL TOO STATIC TROOP CONCENTRATIONS IN ONLY A FEW PLACES IN SAHARA IS NO ANSWER TO EFFECTIVE COUNTERMEASURES, THE MOROCCANS MAY CHANGE THEIR STRATEGY BY EMPLOYING SMALLER, MORE MOBILE UNITS MAKING GREATER USE OF FRENCH-SUPPLIED PUMA HELICOPTERS. THE MAIN POINT TO BEAR IN MIND IS THAT THE KING, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY ARE UNITED ON THE NECESSITY TO CONTINUE TO EXERCISE PATIENCE, NO MATTER HOW FRUSTRATING THIS MAY BE, AS THEY ALL RECOGNIZE THAT ANY MOVE INTO ALGERIA TO STOP POLISARIO MILITARY ACTIONS WOULD BE A POLITICAL DISASTER IN TERMS OF LOSING THE INCREASING SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING MOROCCO HAS LABORIOUSLY GAINED IN INTERNATIONAL FORA FROM THE MORE MODERATE NATIONS.

3. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, TIME IS ON THE SIDE OF MOROCCO IN VALIDATING ITS CLAIMS TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SAHARA. ALGERIAN-SUPPORTED POLISARIO MILITARY ACTION IN AND OF ITSELF CANNOT BE DECISIVE IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCCESSES ON THE POLITICAL FRONT. TO DATE PROGRESS ON THIS FRONT HAS BEEN LIMITED AT BEST. THE POLISARIO WAS VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED AT PORT LOUIS, AND PLAYED NO ROLE AT COLOMBO. MORE IMPORTANTLY PERHAPS HAS BEEN THE INABILITY OF THE SO-CALLED SAHARAN DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC OR FOR THAT MATTER ALGERIA, TO PERSUADE ANY ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES TO JOIN THOSE ORIGINAL FEW RADICALS IN EXTENDING RECOGNITION.

4. RESULTS OF COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT - MOROCCO FARED VERY WELL ON THE SAHARA QUESTION. ALGERIA WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN HAVING ITS RESOLUTION ADOPTED, AND MOROCCO'S TACTIC OF HAVING THE NAM RECOGNIZE THAT THE ISSUE WAS ALREADY BEING CONSIDERED WITHIN THE OAU WAS UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED IN AN AMENDMENT TO THE POLITICAL DECLARATION. THE FACT THAT THE NAM DID NOT RECOGNIZE THAT ARAB LEAGUE WAS ALSO SEIZED WITH THE QUESTION WAS NOT A SUBSTANTIVE SETBACK AS THE DELIBERATIONS OF THIS BODY ON INTRA-ARAB PROBLEMS WERE CUSTOMARILY, TO PUT IT MILDLY, INDECISIVE. PERHAPS ALGERIA'S BIGGEST SETBACK AT COLOMBO, AND ONE WHICH SHOULD HELP MOROCCO AT THE UNGA, WAS ITS INCREASING RELIANCE FOR SUPPORT ON A NUMBER OF THE SMALLER, MORE RADICAL

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AND/OR PRO-COMMUNIST STATES SUCH AS CUBA, VIETNAM, LAOS, CAMBODIA AND NORTH KOREA. THAT THESE STATES ARE NON-AFRICAN AND NON-ARAB SHOULD BE A PLUS FOR MOROCCO AMONG THE MODERATES IN THESE AREAS.

5. FRENCH POSITION ON SAHARA QUESTION AT UNGA - SINCE THE LAST UNGA THE FRENCH POSITION HAS BEEN, AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE ONE OF PUBLIC NEUTRALITY ON AN ESSENTIALLY REGIONAL PROBLEM

AMONG ARAB NATIONS WHILE QUIETLY HELPING MOROCCO ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY. AT THE UNGA FRANCE SHOULD, AS WAS THE CASE LAST YEAR, CONTINUE TO HAVE AS THE BASE OF ITS POSITION THE MADRID AGREEMENT SIGNED BY SPAIN, MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA OF WHICH THE "PRO-MOROCCAN" RESOLUTION LAST DECEMBER TOOK NOTE.

6. IN CONSIDERING ALGERIAN REACTION TO A PRO-MOROCCAN STANCE AT THE FORTHCOMING UNGA, ONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT FRENCH-ALGERIAN RELATIONS WERE NOT GOOD BEFORE THE SAHARA BECAME AN ISSUE, AND THAT WHILE THEY BECAME WORSE AFTER FRANCE'S PROCEDURAL AND OTHER VOTES LAST DECEMBER, THIS WAS A TEMPORARY PHENOMENON. THESE RELATIONS, WHICH ARE GOVERNED FAR MORE BY DIFFICULT BILATERAL PROBLEMS THAN BY FRANCE'S POSITION ON THE SAHARA, SOON RETURNED TO THEIR CUSTOMARY DIFFICULT STATE. IF FRANCE WERE TO TAKE A PRO-ALGERIAN POSITION AT THE UNGA, IT WOULD LOSE THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS IT NOW HAS WITH MOROCCO, AND WOULD RECEIVE A TEMPORARY BENEFIT AT BEST WITH ALGERIA. ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTINUING TO VOTE ON A PRO-MOROCCAN RESOLUTION WOULD CAUSE ONLY TEMPORARY TENSION IN FRANCE'S ALREADY NEGATIVE RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS MOROCCO IS CALLED FOR AT THE UNGA. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN ALGIERS SHARES THESE VIEWS. NO WORD HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE QUAI D'ORSAY, BUT IT WILL ALSO PROBABLY CONCUR.
ANDERSON

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